

Some Tribal Origins, Laws, and Customs of the Balkans

598 house of a relative of his to live there till the marriage was arranged and declared herself a Mohammedan. As she was not of age, her parents appealed to the archbishop, who intervened, and she was sent home. Then, to save her from Turkish influence, she was sent to friends at Podgoritza. Here she obstinately declared that she wished to be Moslem till those in charge of her saw that she wore a Turkish amulet round
 777 her neck. They cut the string and threw the thing in the fire. Scarcely had it burnt up when she at once became Christian again. So ended her poor little romance, and I was told it was unlikely she would ever find a good husband owing to this fatal infatuation. Marko considered it, indeed, a mercy that the evil amulet had been discovered, and was horrified when I said I was sorry for her.

776 *Evil Spirits.*—In addition to witches and magicians in Albania there are many mischievous spirits. These are the "ore," a word which an Albanian often translates as "devil." The ore, however, are not the ordinary devils known to Christianity; they are relics of some pre-Christian beliefs, and are usually seen at night as fiery sparks, and delight to prevent a traveller from proceeding by circling round him and confusing him completely. Once, when starting from Scutari to Djakova, Tony Precha was thus stopped on the way. There is but one thing to be done, and that is to wait till the first cock crows, when they vanish at once.

Another delight of theirs is to ride horses at night and knot their manes. These knots should on no account be untied. The ore also guard hidden treasure, and by confusing the seeker prevent him from finding it.

The ore were generally believed to be females.

776 Much magic surrounds hidden treasure. Throughout the Balkans
 777 there is a belief in masses of treasure hidden in ancient days. The hider
 789 consigned it to the care of the earth "amanet," which may deliver it up only if certain formulæ are observed. A person ignorant of these formulæ may dig on the right spot and find nothing but sticks and stones. An example given me in the mountains was that of a man who buried some money at the foot of a tree, at the same time bidding the earth not to give it up till two mice had drawn a carriage round the tree. Unfortunately a man passing by heard this. He returned home, caught two mice, tamed them, and with some trouble harnessed them to a tiny box. He then returned to the tree, drove the mouse-chariot round it, dug on the spot, and found the money. I suggested that he might have done so without troubling to catch and train the mice, but was assured it was impossible. The earth would not have yielded that which had been consigned to it. Much time and ingenuity is spent over the search for treasure. It has led to the destruction of

Magic, Medicine, Soothsaying

much probably valuable material, for when many an ancient grave has been opened and nothing but pottery and bits of bronze or iron found, the treasure-seekers, enraged that the gold should have thus been turned to rubbish because they did not know the formula, have smashed it all into small fragments. 776
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One way to find treasure is to spread a layer of wood-ash over the spot where it is believed to lie. Next morning, if it bears the footprint of any bird or beast—a fox, sheep, etc.—such a creature must be sacrificed upon the spot. A black animal or bird with no touch of white on it is particularly efficacious. 777
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In many places I had to declare to the headmen that I had not come to search for treasure.

Those good days are past. Albania is now being searched for petroleum, and, unless the kindly earth refuses to give it up, the land will be devoured by foreign speculators.

I was once taken a weary tramp in Berisha to see and explain a marvel. On a great mass of rock was a slight hollow into which a man's hand would fit, and near it a depression that was supposed to be like a mule's hoof-print. Both were natural weatherings of the rock. But the native theory was that ages ago, when the rock was soft, a man had hidden a treasure and made the rock flow over it. He had then marked the spot with his hand and the hoof-mark of his beast. Unless the right formula could be obtained there was nothing for it but to quarry and blast the huge mass, and without the formula even this might not avail. I vainly said the marks meant nothing. My excited escort would not let me leave till I had "written" (i.e. drawn) the marks, and promised that if learned men in England could explain them I would return and show them how to find the treasure. 777
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"Hoof-marks" are favourite things in the Balkans. One was shown me on the shores of Lake Presba and ascribed to Sharatz, the magic horse of Marko Kraljevitich; and in a cave on the slopes of the Lovchen in Montenegro I was shown, as a great marvel, a small roundish depression—a hoof-mark, also "made when the rock was soft." Krsto thought it possible that Marko Kraljevitich had once stabled Sharatz here, and several people asked my opinion about it. In the long weary hours, when watching goats on the mountains, men ponder over such trifles and build fancies upon them. Weary and weary are those endless hours. I never met anyone who did not speak with hate of the watching of beasts he had had to do when young. Often was I asked to build a factory where a man would be given enough bread for a day's labour and no longer have to watch goats on the mountain. The foreigner is now starting works; I doubt if they bring the expected happiness. [517]
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In the hill-side on the left of the road from Djakova to Prizren I

159 ambuscade by the men of Gardiki and Tchormovo,
 175 together with Ali and her only daughter, Shainitza.
 562 After having been subjected to every indignity and
 628 outrage by their captors, Khamko and her children had
 the good fortune to be ransomed by the generosity of a
 Greek merchant for the sum of 22,800 piastres (£3700).

Hatred of those who had thus humiliated her took
 entire possession of the Aghadina's soul, and her one
 idea thenceforward was to train up her son as the
 avenger of her wrongs. With this object she com-
 menced to instil into his mind those pernicious
 principles which he was only too well disposed to
 receive, and which may be summed up in the words
 [577] *Might is right*, an adage sufficiently popular among
 the turbulent Albanian clans. Ali's first attempt to
 vindicate his rights in the field was a complete failure.
 Having met with a more vigorous resistance than he
 expected, he fled from the fight, and was one of the
 first to re-enter Tepeleni. Khamko, furious at find-
 ing all her hopes blasted by what she deemed his
 cowardice, loaded him with reproaches, and thrusting
 her distaff into his hand, added, "Go, coward, and
 spin with the women in the harem; thou art fitter for
 that than for the career of arms!" Ali's fortunes
 indeed fluctuated for some time between success and
 failure. While he was absent on a campaign, Khamko
 found herself on her death-bed, and, though repeated
 and urgent messages were despatched to him, she died
 before he could arrive. The Aghadina in her will
 bequeathed to her son and daughter the task of immo-
 lating to her *manes* the inhabitants of Gardiki and
 Tchormovo, at whose hands they had suffered such

their young wives in charge of their parents. 463
 For with the Skipetars, as with the majority of 593
 Oriental peoples, patriarchal customs still survive, 591
 and all the sons bring home their brides to the
 paternal roof, there to remain in subjection to the
 parents-in-law until they shall themselves be heads of
 families.

The highest aspiration of an Albanian wife is to be the 562
 mother of boys, and she is less proud of her own beauty 593
 and the rank of her family than of the number of her 181
 sons and of their valour. The mother of many sons is
 sure of the lasting affection of her husband, enjoys the
 respect and consideration of the rest of his family, and
 wields great authority in the household to which she
 has come as a stranger. As they never permanently 888
 leave the paternal roof, she may look forward to their 593
 support and affection in her old age, and to see their
 children growing up around her. When her husband [484]
 leaves his home for a sojourn at a distance, custom re-
 quires that she should manifest no grief at his depar-
 ture. Instead of accompanying him to the threshold,
 and watching his familiar figure disappear in the
 distance, or going to meet him on his arrival, she
 hides herself at both the moment of his arrival and of 484
 his departure. A woman's tears or joy, they say, must 562
 not soften a man's heart when his duty lies before [152]
 him. Neither must they ask for news of them at any
 time during their absence. Yet in the depth of their
 hearts no wives more regret the absence of their hus-
 bands, as the touching little superstitious observances [777]
 with which they console themselves testify. Un- [789]
 known to their partners, they sew in their clothes

THE WOMEN OF TURKEY. [CHAP. VIII.]

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small objects, which they themselves have worn, as talismans to ensure their safe return, and during their often protracted absences they resort to various methods of divination, either with or without the aid of a professional wise woman, in order to discover how their beloved spouses fare, where they sojourn, and how they are occupied.

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The men on their side are not free from homesickness, and many are the pathetic little exile-songs, in which their longings for their native mountains, and for the beloved ones from whom they are, for a time, separated, find expression. One may serve as a specimen:

[539]

Now in Bender, now in Buda,

Bide we lone and desolate.

Patience, heart! What boots complaining,

So it hath been willed by Fate.

Yet this grievous bitter exile

Cannot longer still be borne;

Is't naught that we like felons wander

From Fatherland as outlaws lorn?

Who the exile's griefs can number?

Say whose woes can equal mine?

E'en the viper, should she sting me,

Poisoned by my blood would pine!

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The amusements of the Albanian women are, for the most part, limited to birth and wedding festivities, at which singing and dancing are the principal features. Albanian dances are of two kinds: the Pyrrhic, as it is called by travellers, which is usually indulged in by the men, and a kind of "kerchief dance," which is affected by the women, the two sexes always performing separately. The women dance in couples,

776 dainty raiment, and exhaling a fragrant odour. They live in the mountains, but after nightfall frequently approach the abodes of men in order to allure mortal youths to join their dances. If a boy so favoured keeps his own counsel, he may join in these fairy revels with impunity, but should he venture to inform others of his relations with these nocturnal visitors, they revenge themselves by killing him.

The Ore is a being who constantly wanders about in order to hear and carry into effect the blessings and curses pronounced by men on each other. In [735] North Albania the usual formula with which a beggar [789] concludes his thanks and blessings for alms received is, "May the Ore hear and bring it to pass."

Among the malevolent supernals are three kinds of man-devouring female monsters. The Koutchédra (*κουτζέδρα*), the Dogsuckler (*συγκυννίζα*), and the Liouvia (*λιουβία*). The first figures frequently in folk-tale, and besides her cannibalistic propensities, is credited with the power of drying up the springs and fountains at which she drinks. The Dogsuckler is endowed with four eyes, two in the front of her head, and two in the back. The Liouvia is extremely partial to the flesh of little children.

776 Diseases are generally personalised as female mon-
753 sters, whose touch is death. One of these is called in Elbassan the Phliame (*φλιάμε*), whose touch causes "the falling sickness." She is, however, never alluded to by name, it being said of her victim that "The Thing has attacked him." The plague and fatal epidemics generally are represented as more or less similar, but blind beings, called Koukotídh (*κουκοτίδ*).

charred corpses, howling like wolves, donkeys, 775
pigs, black cats, crows, oil-jars, brooms, &c. The
Karkantsoli is the reanimated corpse of a Gipsy, which
is believed to wander about, more especially during [761]
January nights, ridden by cats, and slaying men with
its poisonous breath.

In Albania, as in all the remoter parts of Turkey, 172
there is no Pelasgian ruin to which is not attached 776
some legend of a treasure hidden, and either "guarded 789
by word and by spell," or placed in the safe keeping
of a gigantic Negro, Djinn, or other Supernal. Those
who have concealed treasure in such places have
also, it is believed, fixed the time at which it may
be brought to light, and have left to their heirs a
document containing a description of the hiding-place,
the formula of the magic spell pronounced over it
at the moment of burial, with the year, day, and hour,
on which alone it can be recovered.¹ At the appointed
time the heir goes to the spot indicated, pronounces
the mysterious words, and the treasure immediately
rises to the surface. Sometimes, however, the treasure
is buried in such a way that, at the appointed time, it
rises spontaneously to the surface, and any one finding
it may appropriate it. The lucky person must, how-
ever, be careful to keep his own counsel in the matter,
or he will be punished by finding the gold turned to
charcoal, and will not long survive the incident.
When the treasure is in the keeping of a Negro, he 776
occasionally spreads it out in the sunshine in order
that it may not be damaged by the damp, and, at the

¹ Compare the Kârdish story of "The Armenian and the Dervish,"
p. 169.

842 remove the charm. If an Albanian, having lost his first wife, marries a second in what the relatives of the deceased may consider indecent haste, they revenge themselves upon him by pouring water upon the grave of his dead wife, in the belief that this will have the effect of causing his second spouse to be childless.

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751 Among the Christian Tosks, if two or more children of a family have died in infancy, the next born baby is passed three times through a kind of iron tripod. If yet another child dies, the next baby is placed where four roads meet, a silver cross, for which nine women who bear the name of Maro have given the metal, is laid on its body, and the first passer-by is asked to be godfather or godmother to it.

[608]
782 In some places, the neighbourhood of Dibra, for instance, black sheep are said to be sacrificed by witch-wives for the benefit of sick persons. Similar sacrifices appear to be now substituted for those of human beings, who, in the popular traditions of the Albanians, as in those of other nations, are said to have been formerly buried under the foundations of important buildings;¹ for Von Hahn relates that, during the present century, when a new bridge was about to be built by the Governor-General's orders over the rapid river Arcen, twelve sheep were sacrificed, their heads being buried under the piers, in order that they might be able to withstand the force of the current.

● 789 When swarms of locusts or cockchafers, as some-

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¹ See, for instance, the Greek song of "The Bridge of Arta," *Greek Folk-songs*, p. 81; and "The Monastery of Argis" in Alexandri's *Baltades de la Roumanie*.

times happens, are ravaging the country, a number of 789
 women assemble, and, having captured some of the 731
 insects, form a mock funeral procession, and, with
 hair dishevelled, proceed to drown them in the nearest
 well or stream, singing in turn as they go the follow-
 ing dirge, which is repeated by the others in chorus :

O locusts ! O cockchafers ! parents kind,
 Orphaned you have left us all behind !

This ceremony is believed to cause the death of the
 rest of the destructive swarm.

If one of a herd of cattle dies, its head is buried in 782
 the farmyard in order that a similar fate may not befall 231
 the rest of the herd. When an ox or cow is ill, "un-
 spoken-over" water is brought and sprinkled over it.
 If several of the cattle are ailing, and in other cases of
 a serious nature, the water used is brought from three
 different wells or springs, and mixed together, its
 efficacy being believed to be thus increased to a three-
 fold degree.

Very numerous are the ceremonies observed with 789
 the object of ensuring good, or averting bad, luck. In 484
 Northern Albania, when a youth, or man, is about to
 leave his home for a distant town a curious ceremony
 is performed, which is believed to ensure him a safe
 and successful journey. In front of the house-door
 the women place a jar filled with "unspoken-over"
 water, decorated with foliage and hung with earrings
 of gold and silver. The traveller touches the jar with
 his foot, takes in his hand the earrings and some of
 the foliage, and sets out, accompanied for a mile or
 two by his relatives, to whom, when they finally take

789 leave of him, he returns the earrings. It is considered
 484 a bad omen for the journey if the traveller should for
 any reason turn or look back. If he have left any-
 thing behind, he sends another to fetch it; and should
 a friend or stranger call to him from behind, he will
 not turn back to meet him, but remain standing
 where he is until the other comes up, a practice which
 foreigners, not understanding the reason for it, have
 put down to discourtesy. If on the road the traveller
 [777] meets a fox, or a flock of sheep, he considers it a good
 augury; a flock of goats, however, or a hare crossing
 the road, is held to signify ill luck.

778 Travellers in Upper Albania may frequently see
 775 stones placed in the forks or hollows of roadside trees.
 484 According to M. Hecquard,¹ this practice originates in
 the belief that the stones serve as resting-places for
 the feet of those unhappy beings for whom the rites
 of sepulture have not been properly performed, and
 who, while wandering in mid-air, can alight upon
 them as on the solid earth. To place a stone on a tree
 is also said in some mysterious way to diminish the
 fatigue of the pedestrian, and help him on his journey.

787 Omens and auguries, too, both good and evil, are
 drawn from all the trifling occurrences of every-day
 life, as well as from the observation of the phenomena
 of Nature, besides being sought for in the bones and
 entrails of slaughtered sheep and in the flight of birds.
 Among the omens read in the actions of the domestic
 animals are the following. When introducing a
 newly purchased cow into the farmyard, some object,
 made of iron or silver, is placed across the gateway

¹ *La Haute Albanie.*

December the housewife makes, besides other sweet cakes, some in the shape of rings, which are called *Kolëndhra*. The one first made is termed "the cake of the oxen," and is hung up on the wall "for luck," and left there until the farmer goes out with his team to the fields. On this occasion the cake is taken down and broken to pieces on the head of one of the yoked oxen, and then divided between the pair. 527
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Fire-ceremonies play a great part in the Christmas observances of the Albanian highlanders. As may have already been remarked in connection with birth-ceremonies, a protective and salutary character appears to attach to the fire on the hearth, and not only on such occasions, but on the eve of every important festival, the Albanian peasants light fires and keep them burning until sunset on the following day, even in summer; and from the crackling, or exploding, noises emitted by the wood in burning, they learn when the enemies of their house are conspiring against them, and whether the flocks will thrive, or the contrary. On ordinary occasions they consider it inauspicious when the thick end of a log burns before the thin, and are careful not to place one log across another. On Christmas Eve, however, all such precautions are considered unnecessary. The fire is piled up as high as the safety of the house will permit, as this is supposed to neutralise all evil effects of the non-observance of the foregoing precautions during the coming year. The largest log that can be found is brought home at sunset, when all the family, who are reunited for the festival, rise to greet it with the words, "Welcome, our log! God has destined thee for the fire! Bring 789
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• 789 good luck to us and to our flocks!" Before the
372 family sit down to supper a small quantity of food from every dish on the table is placed upon the burning log. Some branches of a cherry tree are also put on the fire, and, when partially burnt, are taken off again and kept.

857 Soon after midnight, the boys, in companies of from
533 ten to fifteen, go singing from house to house, and receive, in reward for their carols, a ring-cake from each housewife.

527 On the Eve of St. Basil (January 1) the fire is
789 also kept burning all night, and the half-burnt cherry
787 branches are again thrown on and withdrawn, to be
[372] wholly consumed on the Eve of the Epiphany, when the ashes are collected and strewn in the vineyard. The fire of St. Basil's Eve is often watched by an expectant mother, who thus hopes to ensure an easy confinement. In the morning people wash themselves and their children with "unspoken-over" water, and draw omens from the character, gay or sad, of the person who first enters the house. A cock is also sacrificed, for it is auspicious to spill blood in the house on St. Basil's Day.

789 On the Eve of Epiphany the fire is also kept alight
[787] all night, and in the morning the character of the coming seasons is prophesied from the set of the wind. If a south wind blows, it indicates a full harvest and sickness; if the wind is from the east, a scanty harvest and a healthy year are predicted; if from the north, a late spring. The Christians, on the Feast of Epiphany, sprinkle their vineyards with holy water, in the hope of ensuring a plentiful crop of

grapes. They also place at the four corners of each plot four vine stems tied together with straw bands, and under them a piece of a cake called a *kophlopite*, made specially for the purpose, wine being one of its ingredients. A round loaf is rolled from the gate to the middle of the vineyard, and then distributed to the ravens, crows, and other birds which damage the grapes, with this invitation, "Assemble, O crows and ravens, so that we may eat and drink, and that you may do us no more harm!" 789●

On the 1st of February, St. Tryphon's Day, it is considered lucky to work in the fields, but not in the vineyards. On the 2nd, the "Feast of the Purification," all kinds of small pulse and cereals are cooked together in a pot, and this mess, called *kar-kasina*, forms the staple food of the day. On the eve of the 1st of March, a kind of divination is performed by throwing into the fire a particular kind of leaf and pronouncing at the same time the name of a member of the family. If the leaf makes an explosive noise while burning, it is held to be a good omen for the person indicated, but if it burns quietly, the reverse. On this vigil a clod of earth, on which a few drops of wolf's milk have been sprinkled, is thrown against the door in order that the cows and goats may milk well. In the morning the cattle are whipped with cherry branches, in order that they may enjoy good health, and people wash themselves with wine with a view to preserving themselves from vermin during the summer. As an additional precaution, they also catch a flea, which they impale on the point of a new 787 [372] 789 [515]

* The ancient *φολλακάρδα*.

- 789 needle, a warning evidently to other fleas of the fate awaiting them.

[751] The women in South Albania twist together a number of coloured threads and tie them round the children's wrists and necks, in order to preserve them from sunburn or sunstroke, and draw a similar thread along the threshold of the house. They also roll up tightly little balls of rag, at which they stitch assiduously with a needle and thread; and when asked what they are doing, they reply, "We are sewing up the plague, snakes, and sickness." On this day no vegetables are eaten, the sweet cakes and dishes, in which the Ritza alone indulge, being believed to ensure a good summer. The whole of this month is a close time for the ravens, as to kill one would bring bad luck to the vintage.

527 The North Albanians begin their year on the 1st of March. On this day the cattle are decked with garlands of flowers, and the Ghegs not only tie threads of
789 many colours on the wrists and necks of their children,
777 but themselves also wear one of red silk on the little
[805] finger of the right hand and the great toe of the right foot. When the first swallow has been seen, they take off these threads, and hang them on the rose-bushes, in order that the swallows may take them to their nests.

[177] Von Hahn is of opinion that this graceful little custom is not indigenous, and it may indeed have been partly borrowed, either from the Bulgarians, or, through the neighbouring Vlachs, from the Roumanians, with whom, as I have already mentioned,¹ a similar usage exists. While I was at Salonica, one

¹ Vol. I. p. 335.

of these parti-coloured bracelets, with a tiny gold coin 527
 attached, was, on the 1st of March (Old Style), pre-789
 sented by the Roumanian Consul-General to each lady 777
 of his acquaintance, and I, for one, religiously wore my
 charm against the power of the March sun, which in
 the East generally is said to "blacken" the com-
 plexion, until the month was out. It was not, how-
 ever, finally thrown to the swallows, but carried off
 by an English visitor as a curio.

On the 25th of this month the women go through 789
 the house beating on copper pans, in order to drive
 out any poisonous snakes that may have intended to
 take up their abode there. The two last days of
 March and the first of April are called *Plyaketé*, a
 word signifying "old," and referring to the past
 season, personified as "Old Mother Winter." If by [754]
 the last-mentioned date Spring has not yet fully set
 in, the blame is laid at the door of the old women,
 who are evidently held to be in league with "Old
 Mother Winter."

On Easter Eve in some places, Selitza, for instance, 789
 the young men assemble with lighted torches, which [372]
 they wave about as they walk in procession through
 the village. Arrived at the river, they throw them in,
 crying, "*Koré-ya* (O Maiden)! We throw thee into
 the water with these torches, so mayest thou never
 return!" the *Koré* evidently referring, as Von [776]
 Hahn suggests,¹ to the malevolent supernals, Vilas,
 Dragonas, &c., before described. When the priest
 comes to bless the house on Easter Day, the women [788]
 throw after him, as he leaves, hot embers from the

¹ *Albanesische Studien*, p. 160.

789 hearth, in order that he may take away with him all
788 danger from fire for the coming year.

789 St. John's Eve is observed in Albania with the
372 customary bonfire, to leap over which is considered so
salutary that even the old people venture to do so
at least once. A curious ceremony, performed about
this season, when the spring sowing is concluded,
may also be here mentioned. Standing with his
back to the plough, the farmer rubs part of the
[136] handle with earth in the belief that the wild swine
will thus be prevented from damaging his crops.

789 On the day on which the new moon is first seen, all
possible work is avoided, and no important task of
any kind, such as ploughing, sowing, or harvesting,
is commenced, for it would be sure to be unsuccessful.
The girls and children look at the moon through a
sieve, and rub their faces with a piece of silver, while
they sing:

[539]

Young moon!
Young maid!
Health to me;
Ill to thee!

Head as soft as dough be thine!
Head as hard as stone be mine!

777 The 9th, 19th, and 29th days of every month are
considered unlucky, as is also the Tuesday of every
week, for setting out on a journey, or commencing
any kind of work. Friday is also an inauspicious day
[241] for sowing, and Saturday for beginning to plough
or dig.

PEAKS OF SHALA

[13]

789 "Doubtless it had a bird or snake for guardian,
776 and that spirit came and took it away again,"

said Cheremi, and Perolli explained that when one buries a treasure one calls to some creature of the woods and intrusts the hoard to its care.

"O spirit of the small gray serpent with poison in thy tooth, guard for me this treasure. Let no man see it for ten times ten years, and then deliver it only to those of my family," would be

a simple formula, but usually more imagination is used. For instance, Perolli knew of a man who called the large magpie to watch him bury his treasure, and he said to the bird, "Let no one uncover this gold until two black mice have dragged three times around this tree a carriage made of an acorn cup, with a small mouse in it."

But his incantation was overheard, and the crafty neighbor caught and dyed and trained the mice and made the carriage, and had them drag it three times around the tree, after which the magpie gave up the treasure. Otherwise it would have disappeared when a hand was laid upon it.

ooo "But does Cheremi really believe these things?"

I asked myself, and, looking at his serious face and Perolli's, I was struck with the startling idea that Perolli believed them, too, in spite of his English suit and European education, and I felt in my own mind something like a soft landslide, uncovering possibilities of wild beliefs in myself.

"Anything can happen in the mountains of Albania," I said, picking up my staff and rising, for the shadows of the western mountains were

¹[Image of gold, see cat. 116, p. 47.- [48] Analyst]

[123] informant in Bytyç their business was to prop up the big stone. The association of the three, one big and two small, was so distinct that it could be seen at a glance that they were boundary stones.

In old days, in places as far apart as Kurvelesh in south-west Albania and Lumë in the north-east, some pieces of charcoal, generally three, were put under the big boundary stone; in Lumë a fragment of tile was added. Centuries might pass, but charcoal and tile remained as imperishable evidence of the true line of the [123] boundary. In case one neighbour charged the other with moving the stones the elders dug these up; if they found no charcoal under them they knew they had been moved and dug all round until they came on charcoal and with it the original boundary. A man who went to move boundary stones always went on a dark night when the buried charcoal was as invisible as himself, and so far as was known his ingenuity never ran to taking a handful with him from home.

[123] Boundary stones were set up with all the ceremony befitting a mark that was to last for ever. All the members of the families concerned, the village elders, as many children and youths of the village as possible, as many men from neighbouring villages as possible and all the tribal elders gathered to witness the event and [123] to preserve its memory for their lifetime. When the entity to be divided—field, farmyard, vineyard, etc.—had been measured with a rope or by pacing into the required number of portions, the elder chosen to delimit the boundary put any chance stone and a clod of earth on his right shoulder, and after swearing upon his soul to delimit justly, moved forward along the boundary line followed by all the witnesses. It was his duty to walk in a straight line in order to iron out every possibility of future conflict—‘a boundary mustn’t twist’ said the law—but if he deviated slightly no one could correct him; it was his responsibility. All the objector could do was to say, ‘Well, lead the way and if you don’t act righteously may that weight lie heavy on you in the other life’. At the two ends and in the middle the elder—no one else—dug a hole in which he set up the big stone at one end, packing the smaller ones round it. When he finished, he laid his hand on the big stone and solemnly cursed anyone who should seek to move it, saying in Mirditë, ‘Whoever moves this stone, shall be weighted down with it in the life beyond’. In Lumë the curse was vaguer, ‘Here are your boundaries, men’, said the elder. ‘Don’t move them because it’s bad’—in this world where quarrelling results and in the other

BOUNDARIES

97

where damnation follows. When the last big stone was in place the witnesses fired in the air to signify that the ceremony was over. 423
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When a geographical feature was available, it was often utilized as a boundary. For instance, an irrigation channel might be recognized as such. The dividing line between the neighbours then ran down the middle. It could not be diverted or otherwise interfered with by either neighbour, since it contained running water and had been made long years before—a point that gave it the permanence indispensable in a boundary. In Mirditë a very old tree sometimes marked the division between two pieces of land. In all areas growing trees of any age might outline forest and even village boundaries. Notches were cut in each; all the ground this side of a notch belonged to one neighbour and all on that to the other. Between big units such as villages or forests, though not small ones like fields or houses, a watershed or a torrent bed often formed the boundary. 'God has separated the two; nature has decided their boundaries', said the people of such cases. Sometimes a road was the boundary between the villages; a field-path was never important enough for this purpose. Finally, in some 609 groups of villages near Elbasan, such as Godolesh, Griqan and Labinot, there was so much buying of land in one village by natives of the others that no very definite line was drawn between their territories, though the boundaries of individual properties were as clearly marked and as fiercely defended as they were elsewhere. In the north, since no outsider could buy land in a village, there was no fluidity of boundary, whether village or private.

The delimiting elder was usually one of the recognized elders of 623
789 the village. Sometimes only one was employed, more often there was one for each new neighbour, and in sprawling areas like Martanesh ten or even fifteen men might be asked to help. In Shijan elders often worked only 'for the good of their soul' and took no fee; elsewhere they charged one to two napoleons according to local rates. In Surroj they asked no less than four napoleons but seldom received them; to save this heavy fee, the older of the new neighbours set up the boundary stones, and only if he seemed to be cheating did a younger man think it necessary to call in an elder. That elder carried the earth and stone of the oath on his shoulder. In Çermenikë, however, he carried them in his hands and in Labinot he did not carry them at all, only spoke of doing so. Both these usages seem degenerations from the original. The

623 expression 'to take on the shoulder', which is frequently heard in
 • 789 speech all over the country in the sense of 'to destroy' or 'to ruin',
 seems to derive from this obviously very ancient method of making
 oath. 'If I don't act justly, may I carry this weight in this world
 and the next', the elder swore solemnly as, irrespective of whether
 he was Catholic, Orthodox or Moslem, he embarked on his
 delimitation. In most cases he believed that if he were unfair the
 earth and stone would punish him literally as he said. 'Earth will
 rot us all one day; we can't put it lightly on our shoulders like
 a stone. It's a very serious thing; we stake our soul by touching
 it', were some of the expressions used to explain the general fear.
 Some men were so frightened of the dread symbols that they
 would not undertake to delimit a boundary, saying, 'It's a serious
 business to undertake such a thing; it brings you up against God's
 justice'. A few others, it must be confessed, were sceptical enough
 in consideration of a bribe to defy the consequences of perjury
 and to delimit unfairly.

423 Boundary stones then were set up by elders in the presence of
 527 witnesses as an abiding memorial to the ownership of the land
 they outlined. 'A fence may rot, a boundary does not', said the
 proverb. 'Let ever so many be killed; a field, or mountain,
 a vineyard cannot be seized by force; the boundary stones say who
 is the lawful owner', was another aphorism. In many places it was
 customary, generation after generation, to 'ride the marches' once
 a year so that the old could show the young where the stones were
 and so forge the next link in the endless chain of memory. Like
 its British counterpart, the custom gave occasion for a public
 holiday. Often performed, as in Nangë, at the spring festival of
 'Summer Day', all men and boys in a village went round every
 known boundary in it. They saw that the boundary stones were
 still in place and not sunk out of sight, noted their position, and
 cleared away thorns and other concealing overgrowth. Often, as in
 Nangë, they were led by gypsies banging joyously on drums.

423 It was thought a sin to move boundary stones, since they had
 685 been set up in such solemn circumstances by elders, the highest
 783 tribal authorities. But land-hunger was so prevalent that the sin
 was all too common. With the lapse of time, too, boundary stones
 might sink out of sight in the ground and the boundary line be
 obliterated. Disputes over boundaries were consequently endless.
 To prevent them there were various deterrents. Men of weight—

- 771 Thus their practices and beliefs included: building sacrifices,
[782] which at one point were most probably human sacrifices; the faith
[769] in the existence of certain snakes that guarded treasures and in the
tutelary spirits of people; exposing the dead after the manner of the
Parsi, as a result of that lack of respect for the corpse which springs
from the knowledge of the eternity of the spirit--the ancient Thracians
[775] were jubilant whenever someone died, and they wailed when some-
one was born--; werewolf conceptions; separation of the soul in sleep;
wandering about of the dead, especially of evil people who in the
form of a ghost or in a transformed human shape cause harm. The
foreseeing of the future makes use of materialistic means in order to
survive before the masses in a degenerate age which no longer knows
[787] or believes. It prophesies from the fissures that appear in a heated
sheep's shoulder blade or hen's breast bone; also from the bright and
dark spots in the light filtering through, or from the flight of birds.
[789] The old knowledge of the emanating, radiating spiritual forces of
beings and things is used for magical purposes, for instance little pieces
of paper that have something written on them and which are worn as
a protection or drunk after they have been dissolved in water. The
sun still lives among the Albanians as "God's reflection."

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To the Land of the Eagle

○○○ saint can further their political aims, and, to me, at all events, the matter still remains a mystery.

778 In addition to the belief in the powers of St. John of
782 Scutari—a belief which has a religious background—the local
789 people hold other beliefs, some of which date back to very remote times. The graves of the babas are accounted holy, and are usually covered with cloths put there by pious persons who need assistance. And at a certain spot in the masonry of the ancient city wall there is a window or aperture at which it is customary for women who are unable to nurse their babies to place offerings of bread. When the wall was originally built, many centuries ago, a woman was sacrificed by being enclosed alive in the masonry at this particular spot. The sacrifice, quite a usual one in those days when any constructional work of importance was begun, was intended to propitiate evil spirits who might interfere with the progress of the work. On this occasion an opening was left, so the story goes, through which the unhappy woman might suckle her baby, and it is on this account that the place is supposed to possess the power of stimulating the flow of natural milk in those who make offerings there.

361 The tourist, should he penetrate so far, will find much to interest him in Elbasan, especially on market day, when it is packed with country folk in an astonishing variety of costumes. The surroundings are delightful. There are several parks and open spaces of which the most remarkable is a small square to the south of the town surrounded by